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ROB LIEFELD

YOUNGBLOOD™

DELUXE

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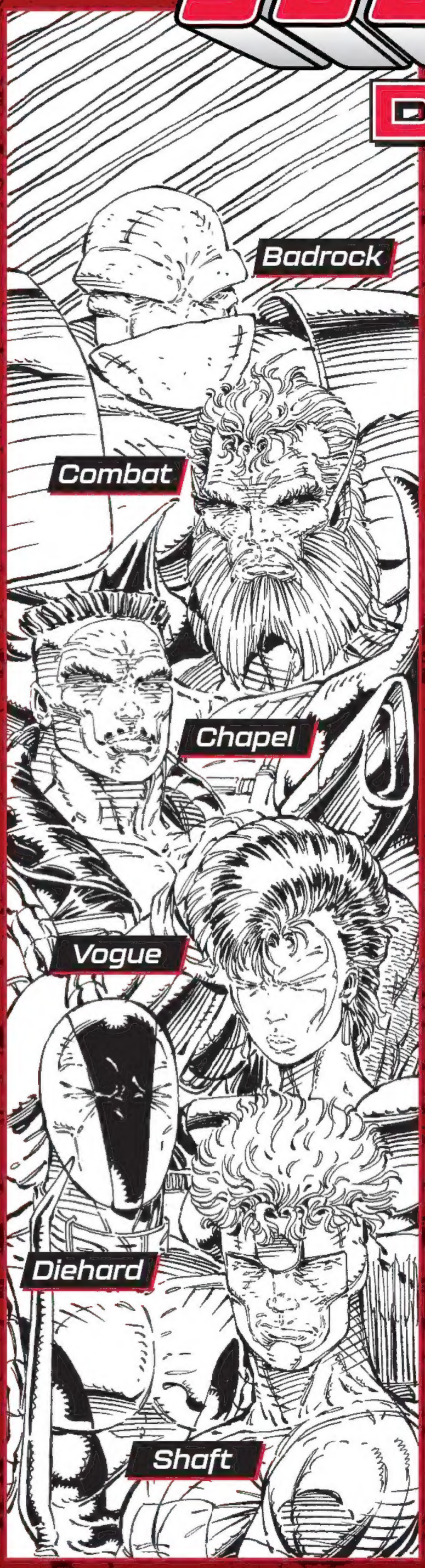
DELUXE



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PROLOGUE

ANOTHER TIME. ANOTHER PLACE. ANOTHER DIMENSION.

A DARK DIMENSION --

-- D'KHAY.

EYES WIDE, TEAM! FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE COMING UP FAST--!

BY THE HOUNDS OF PERDITION'S FLAMES! *FINALLY* SOMETHING TO SINK OUR TEETH INTO!

LAUNCH UNQUALIFIED CARNAGE!

NOT EVEN DISCIPLES HERE! JUST ANOTHER REGIMENT OF DARKTHORNN'S *DEATH SQUAD!* FORWARD!

DEATH WILL BE IN *AMPLE* SUPPLY ON *THIS* GLORY DAY! SCOPE THE ART OF THE SOUL KILL!

THERE'S MORE THAN *ONE* WAY TO CLEAN MY CLAWS! *RABID STACK ATTACK!*

IF YOU DON'T *MIND,* WILDMANE -- SAVE A SCRUB OR TWO FOR *ME!*

CROSS -- TELE-SWEEP READS *BLOCKING FREQUENCIES* THROUGHOUT THIS STRUCTURE...!

COPY THAT, PSI-STORM. KEEP TRYING. IF *YOU* CAN'T PENETRATE THEIR WAVE DEFENSES --

DON'T BOTHER, ALPHA RANKERS --

KA THOOM!

-- I'M RIGHT HERE *WITH* YA'!

KIRBY!

I KNOW YA' TEND TO FROWN ON INDEPENDENT ACTION, BUT REMEMBER, I WASN'T *BORN* IN THIS UPSIDE-DOWN DIMENSION --

-- I WAS A LOWER EAST SIDE KID. DELANCY STREET, SON. LOUD AND DEFINITELY PROUD.

FIGURED *YOU GUYS* WOULD'VE MADE IT *SOONER.*

THIS IS YOUR TURF, AIN'T IT?

JACKSON KIRBY'S A MAN ON A MISSION.

WE HAD A WORM LIKE THIS BACK WHERE I COME FROM --

PLEASE... I BEG YOU... NOT ANOTHER HITLER STORY.

LET'S JUST ATTEND TO THE BUSINESS AT HAND.

I HEAR YA', CROSS. *IF* WE FAIL, COUNTLESS REALITIES WILL FALL BEFORE DARKTHORNN AND HIS ARMY OF DISCIPLES -- INCLUDING *MINE!*

AND *THAT* AIN'T HAPPENING!

VICTORY, TEAM! WHATEVER THE COST!

PSI-STORM -- OPEN THE *CRASH TUNNEL* ON MY MARK --

THIS IS *IT*, FREEDOM FIGHTERS! THE LAST STAND!

THIS DEMENTED TYRANT'S BEEN BREATHIN' OUR AIR FOR ***WAY*** TOO LONG!

AND IT ALL ENDS NOW!

REALITY BENDS. SPACETIME WARPS. A DOORWAY OPENS --

-- AND IF THIS WERE A **DIFFERENT** STORY, THESE NOBLE SOLDIERS WOULD BE ON THEIR WAY TO A REBEL'S TRIUMPH...

... BUT INSTEAD --

AAAA

LORD DARKTHORNN! THE BERZERKER SQUAD HAS --

THEY HAVE BEEN INTERCEPTED IN MID-LEAP. FOR AS LONG AS I DESIRE, THEY WILL BE ***TRAPPED*** WITHIN CRASH LIMBO.

DARKTHORNN. A DESPOT WITH INSATIABLE APPETITES.

I HAVE LIVED MY LIFE BY A DEEP PROPHECY. JACKSON'S INEXPERIENCE HAS BEEN HIS UNDOING. A FATE HAS BEEN EFFECTIVELY ***SEALED.***

HIS PLACE OF ORIGIN -- THE PLANET, ***EARTH*** -- RESIDES WITHIN A DIMENSION PARALLEL TO OURS.

THUS, WE WILL ***CONQUER*** THIS "EARTH" AS WE HAVE SO MANY OTHERS BEFORE IT. IT IS MY WILL TO POWER. IT IS MY MALEVOLENT DESTINY. I AM THE CHAOS BRINGER. I AM THE EXTINGUISHER OF ALL LIGHT.

END OF PROLOGUE

USA TODAY

→ Battlestone still at large with private "Brigade."
→ Riptide seen with

EX-F.B.I. LEADS YOUNGBLOOD

by L.A. Nalzak

White House sources confirmed yesterday that former F.B.I. Agent Jeff Terrell has signed a five-year contract to assume a leadership position within the government's Youngblood superhero task force program.

This follows rumors of a scandal within the celebrated organization with the court marshal and subsequent removal of Youngblood's previous field leader, Colonel John Stone, the result of non-sanctioned operations occurring on the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border late last year.

Terrell -- who will be codenamed, "Shaft" -- brings an exemplary performance record from his twenty-seven months with the F.B.I., graduating top of his class in improvisational marksmanship during agent training.

Representatives of the Youngblood organization had no comment on this week's appointment.

(see COVER STORY p2)

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t Run-D.M.C.'s "Run." 2D.

s will soar across northern
Midwest, Great Lakes. 12A.

Pow! Smash! Ker-plash!

Comics May Be Hea

WASHINGTON, D.C., U.S.A.

-- JUST SOMETHING YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO GET *USED TO*, JEFF...

... THIS KIND OF ***ATTENTION*** IS JUST PART OF THE EQUATION.

AND DON'T FORGET WHO YOU'RE ***SLEEPING WITH--!***

I GET IT. THE LATEST IN A LONG LINE OF TORRID SUPERHERO-RUNWAY MODEL ROMANCES THE TABLOIDS ***LOVE*** TO SCRUTINIZE.

BUT IT'S ONLY BEEN A WEEK AND ***ALREADY*** I'VE WANTED TO KILL OVER A DOZEN STALKERAZZI. PROBABLY NOT THE KIND OF SUPERHERO THE GOVERNMENT HAD IN MIND.

AT LEAST I COULD NEGOTIATE A DAY OFF... A DAY OUT OF THAT SPANDEX NIGHTMARE...!

SO, YOU'RE OFF TO L.A. FOR THAT ***MAXIM*** SHOOT? DO ME A FAVOR... DON'T LET THEM BLINDSIDE YOU WITH QUESTIONS ABOUT --

ABOUT WHAT? ***US?*** WOW... PARANOID, MUCH?

FOR YOUR INFORMATION, I WAS *S.I.'S* SWIMSUIT COVER WHEN YOU WERE JUST AN ANONYMOUS JUNIOR AGENT WITH AN EARPIECE AND A BAD SUIT.

I'VE PLAYED THE FAME GAME IN ALL ITS MANY FORMS. PLAYED IT A LOT LONGER THAN YOU HAVE. SO JUST UNCLENCH AND LET'S --

HEY--!

-- SOMEBODY CALL SECURITY--!

-- RIGHT OVER ***THERE--!***

WHAT --

-- HEY--!

OH HELL...!

HANG TIGHT, SHELLY. LOOKS LIKE I'M ON THE CLOCK--!

TWO SECONDS --

WHAT THE HELL--?!

YOU'RE JUST A KID--!

WH- WHATEVER... SO ARE YOU!

WHULF--!

YOU DO THE CRIME, YOU DO THE TIME. OR, IN THIS CASE --

KRAK

HUHN--!

LONE TIGER TO G.A.T.E. OP CENTER. TARGET IS IN SIGHT. PREPARING TO ENGAGE...

YOU PEOPLE MAKE SURE MY PAYCHECK CLEARS IN MY OFFSHORE ACCOUNT --

-- BECAUSE *THIS* NEW YOUNGBLOOD'S ABOUT TO HAVE HIS CAREER CUT *WAY* SHORT.

WAIT. *HOLD* IT, CENTER --

-- I'VE JUST BEEN *MADE!*

HE'S --

CLASSIC DISTRACTION TACTIC.

NEVER WORKS.

GHUUUHT-!

JEEZUS--!

-- YOU SEE THAT?!

SOMEONE CALL THE COPS--!

DAMN...

... MY ONE DAY OFF AND I KILL SOME NO-NAME WITH THE BALLPOINT MY SUPERVISOR GAVE ME AS A GIFT ON MY LAST DAY AT THE F.B.I...!

OBVIOUSLY, NOT A MEMBER OF MY NEW AUTHORIZED FANCLUB...

-- GOT THE DEAD GUY IN FRAME BEHIND HIM--!

JEFF TERRELL! CAN I CALL YOU SHAFT OUT OF UNIFORM?

ABSOLUTELY NOT.

AND WHO THE HELL ARE YOU PEOPLE?! THIS IS A CRIME SCENE --

MICHAEL GIBSON, ACCESS HOLLYWOOD. WANTED TO GRAB YOUR REACTIONS TO THIS YEAR'S EMMY NOMINATIONS -- BUT THIS IS A MUCH BIGGER STORY!

IS THIS YOUR FIRST CONFIRMED KILL AS A YOUNGBLOOD?

MY FIRST WHAT--?!

I THINK YOU'D BETTER JUST GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE...

ARE YOU KIDDING?! THIS IS REAL NEWS!

WHAT ABOUT THE REPORTS THAT MARCUS LANGSTON'S TEAM IS ON A CLASSIFIED MISSION DEEP INSIDE IRAQ...?

IRAQ--?! ARE YOU *SURE* YOU'RE FROM *ACCESS HOLLYWOOD*?!

SHELLY?! WHERE'D YOU *GO*?!

RIGHT HERE, STUD. NICE PENMANSHIP.

LOOK, I GOTTA' GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE MORE PRESS SHOWS UP AND TURNS THIS INTO A BIGGER JOKE THAN IT ALREADY IS.

I'LL CALL YOU, OKAY?

SURE YOU WILL.

WELCOME TO YOUR NEW LIFE...

--- *SHAFT*.

BALTIMORE, MD

HEY, MA... DO ME A SOLID...

... THOSE GAME DEVELOPERS CALL AGAIN, JUST GIVE 'EM MY CELL NUMBER, 'KAY?

THOMAS -- CHEW YOUR FOOD BEFORE YOU SWALLOW.

I NEED TO SET THESE CHUMPS *STRAIGHT*... GOTTA' BE MORE *COMBO MOVES* DURING HIGHER LEVEL GAMEPLAY...

YOU'RE LEAVING? ANY IDEA WHEN YOU'LL BE HOME?

THAT'S CLASSIFIED, MOM.

JUST KIDDING. I'LL CALL YOU BEFORE TEN.

BE CAREFUL, SON.

MAKE SURE YOU SMILE FOR THE CAMERAS.

ARLINGTON, VA
SUB-LEVEL DELTA

DIAGNOSTICS ONLINE. ALL PRE-LAUNCH CODES -- CHECK.

ACKNOWLEDGED.

PREPARE TO LAUNCH IN T-MINUS FIVE SECONDS...

DIE HARD UNIT HAS CLEARED LAUNCH BAY.

JUST GIMME TWO MORE MINUTES, I'LL BE READY FOR ROUND FOUR.

ROUND *FOUR?!* YOU'RE NOT DONE YET? YOU'RE *KILLIN'* ME, BABY--!

WE GOTTA' DIE SOMETIME, RIGHT? MIGHT AS WELL --

UH OH. GOT A CALL...

DAMN. THEY'RE LOOKING FOR ME.

TIME TO GO.

YOU GOTTA' WORK? DOES THAT MEAN I CAN SEE YOU IN *UNIFORM?* YOU *PROMISED* --

FINE.

THIS WHAT YOU WANT?

DOES THIS TURN YOU ON?

WASHINGTON, D.C.

HOWCUM YOU DIDN'T WEAR ALL THAT BEFORE?! THAT'S WHAT I WANTED--!

"SO AM I THE ONLY ONE AWARE THAT SENTINEL'S IRAQI OP HAS BEEN LEAKED?!"

PHOTON... I GUESS IF YOU'RE HERE, THEN COMBAT MUST BE OUT IN THE FIELD.

INDEED.

SIR, IT'S JUST HIT THE EVENING NEWS...

-- REPORTS THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL SOON ADDRESS THE NATION ARE, AT PRESENT, UNCONFIRMED...

ASSAULT ON IRAQ

LIVE — SNN

--- AS WHITE HOUSE OFFICIALS CONTINUE TO PLAY **DAMAGE CONTROL**, IT **HAS** BEEN CONFIRMED THAT A SPECIALIZED **YOUNGBLOOD** INTERNATIONAL TASK FORCE HAS BEEN DEPLOYED.

FILE FOOTAGE — TOKYO, JAPAN

IF IT IS INDEED A YOUNGBLOOD OPERATION, IT'S EXPECTED TO BE A RELATIVELY **SMALL-SCALE** ASSAULT, UTILIZING ONLY A HANDFUL OF MEMBERS WITH MINIMAL MILITARY BACKUP, SIMILAR TO THE **TOKYO MISSION** NINE MONTHS AGO.

YESTERDAY. — THE WHITE HOUSE

THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM WAS ITS **OWN** WAR ZONE YESTERDAY AS PRESS SECRETARY GREGORY CRAIG WAS BATTERED BY REPORTERS DEMANDING A CONFIRMATION ON THIS LATEST TURN OF EVENTS IN IRAQ. CRAIG REMAINED EVASIVE, HOWEVER... CNN FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT **TIMOTHY HARLOWE** LOGGED THIS REPORT THIS MORNING...

LIVE — SNN

WHILE U.N. INSPECTORS HAVE VERIFIED THE EXISTENCE OF META-HUMAN WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION -- SOME THAT MAY DATE BACK **HALF A CENTURY** -- THIS IS THE FIRST INDICATION OF A **U.S. MILITARY** RESPONSE TO HASSAN KUSSEIN'S REFUSAL TO DISMANTLE HIS COUNTRY'S META-MUNITIONS PROGRAM.

FILE FOOTAGE — KUSSEIN INTERVIEW

SEEN **HERE** FROM AN INTERVIEW TAPED EARLIER THIS YEAR, KUSSEIN HAS REPEATEDLY **DENIED** THAT HIS MILITARY HAS PROCURED PAST TEST SUBJECTS OF A **META-HUMAN ENHANCEMENT STUDY**, ITS ORIGINS BELIEVED TO BE CONNECTED TO U.S. BIO-GENETIC EXPERIMENTS CIRCA WORLD WAR II...

SNN FOREIGN BRANCH

BAGHDAD — TIMOTHY HARLOWE

-- ALL DAY WE'VE BEEN SEEING UNMARKED MILITARY AIRCRAFT -- DEFINITELY NOT IRAQI -- OUTSIDE OF BAGHDAD, SO THERE'S OBVIOUSLY **SOMETHING** BEING STAGED HERE... BUT UNFORTUNATELY THIS IS AS CLOSE AS WE'VE BEEN ALLOWED TO GET...

THEIR RESISTANCE WILL BE CONSIDERABLE! IT WOULD BE WISE TO ALLOW ME TO --

BELAY THAT INITIATIVE, COMBAT! YOU JUST STAY IN FORMATION AND KEEP IT TIGHT--!

HELL, YES! HERE WE COME--!

WE'VE GOT A STRONG TRACE SIGNAL, PEOPLE! WE'RE NOT HERE TO LAY WASTE TO THIS HELLHOLE NATION --

-- SO KEEP YOUR MINDS ON THE MISSION AND WE'LL BE BACK HOME IN NO TIME!

< MY GOD, IT'S TRUE--! >

< THE GREAT SATAN HAS SENT HIS MOST FEARED DEMON HOST--! >

< ALL UNITS -- REPEL THE INVADERS! >*

* - TRANSLATED FROM ARABIC

COUGAR, ***BEWARE!*** THESE TROOPS HAVE BEEN GENETICALLY ENHANCED!

UNNF!

NO WORRIES, CHIEF! THEY'VE GOT THE ***NUMBERS,*** BUT WE'VE GOT THE ***TRAINING,*** RIGHT?

YOU'D BETTER HOPE SO, COUGAR! ALL OPERATIVES -- PRESS THE ADVANTAGE!

JUST MEANS OUR INTEL WAS RIGHT ON THE MONEY!

CUT THE CHATTER! STAY FOCUSED!

THESE MEN ARE NOT ***TRUE*** WARRIORS! ON KATELLA, WE --

HOW 'BOUT YOU SAVE THE OLD HOME REMINISCENCE UNTIL ***AFTERWARDS...?!***

WHEN WE GET HOME, YOU CAN BUST OUT YOUR KATELLAN HIGH SCHOOL YEARBOOK AND WE CAN SHARE A GOOD CRY--!

INGLORIOUS MONGREL!

NO *WONDER* YOU NORMALLY WORK WITH THAT ACURAN SCUM!

YOU SHOULD HEAR WHAT HE SAYS ABOUT *YOU...!*

NOW, IF YOU'LL *EXCUSE* ME --

SENTINEL!

ARE WE *CLOSE?!*

SENSORS SHOW WE'RE ABOUT A MILE OUT.

WHAT DO WE KNOW OF THE ***STATUS*** OF OUR INTENDED TARGET? PERHAPS HE IS FULLY UNDER KUSSEIN'S CONTROL --

NOT ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCES. BUT BE PREPARED TO DEAL WITH THE IRAQI ***HONOR GUARD***... THEY'RE AUTOMATED ***AND*** ARMORED.

SUGGEST ALL YOU WANT, HUMAN. I SHALL HAVE ***MY*** DAY... AND MY ***REVENGE***...

... ***SOON.***

WHY AM I JUST HEARING THIS ***NOW?!***

WHAT?!

NEXT TIME READ THE MISSION BRIEF WE UPLOADED TO YOUR HANDHELD.

ON ***THIS*** SQUAD, WE HAVE A PROCEDURE. I SUGGEST YOU LEARN IT.

SURROUNDED BY PURE HUMAN INSIGNIFICANCE. IS THERE ANY WAY WE CAN SPEED THIS UP?

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE, PSI-FIRE? THEY'VE GOT US ALL FOR FIVE YEARS, IRON CLAD.

ANOTHER BITCH SESSION ABOUT YOUR *CONTRACT*, LEANA?

FOR THE HUNDREDTH TIME... IN THE FIELD, IT'S *"RIPTIDE"*. GET IT STRAIGHT, KID. IT'S ENOUGH I HAVE TO PULL WATER FROM THE GODDAMN *DESERT* TO MAKE THESE WAVES--!

-- WE SURE AS HELL DON'T NEED YOU *DROWNING* WHOEVER WE *CAME* HERE FOR!

ON MY MARK --

-- *MOVE IN!*

EASE UP, RIPTIDE!

THE MAIN COMPOUND'S JUST BEYOND THESE PERIMETER BUNKERS --

-- AS CLOSE AS WE'VE BEEN ALLOWED TO GET...

TURN IT OFF.

JUST PERFECT.

THIS LEAK OF INFORMATION... *WE* ARE NOT BEING BLAMED, ARE WE?

HEY, I DIDN'T SAY *ANYTHING--!*

I'M NOT SITTIN' THROUGH ANOTHER INTERROGATION BY INTERNAL AFFAIRS, TERRELL. THEY CAN TAKE THEIR QUESTIONS AND SHOVE 'EM UP STRAIGHT UP THEIR --

I GET THE POINT, CHAPEL. I CERTAINLY DON'T NEED *GRAVES* BREATHING DOWN MY NECK ANY MORE THAN --

AWWW, YEAH! TIME TO BUST SOME HEADS!

IT DAMN WELL *DOES.*

NO ONE LIKES SLEEPING ALONE, DIE HARD. THE FOUR ARE A TENACIOUS BUNCH.

OKAY, TEAM... THIS IS IT. EVERYONE IN THE HANGAR BAY IN *NINETY SECONDS--!*

SIR... WE'RE RECEIVING AN ALPHA CHANNEL ALERT.

ONE OF OUR SECURITY TRANSPORTS HAS BEEN *STOPPED* MID-ROUTE -- DRIVER'S REPORTING AN *ASSAULT CHOPPER* IN DESCENT --

THAT TRANSPORT... DOES IT NOT CONTAIN ONE-HALF OF THE *FOUR?*

PRISONERS DESIGNATED: *DEADLOCK* AND *STARBRIGHT,* INCARCERATED SINCE OUR ENCOUNTER WITH THEM IN THE MANHATTAN SUB-WAY SYSTEM.

OUTSIDE KUSSEIN'S SCIENCE COMPOUND

TOUCHDOWN! THERE IT *IS!*

SO, WHERE'S THIS *HONOR GUARD* WE WERE WARNED ABOUT? SECURITY'S A LITTLE *LIGHT* --

AGREED. SOMETHING'S DEFINITELY AMISS HERE...!

HONOR GUARD ASIDE... THIS IS OBVIOUSLY AN ATTEMPT TO *TRAP* US SOMEHOW--!

THEY DON'T WANT US NEAR WHATEVER THEY'VE GOT ON ICE... YOU'D THINK THEY'D BE THROWING EVERYTHING AND THE KITCHEN SINK AT US...!

SO LET'S *SPRING* THE TRAP, COACH! IN *THIS* BROKEN-DOWN EXCUSE FOR A COUNTRY -- WHAT KINDA' TRAP ARE *WE* GONNA' WORRY ABOUT?!

GET YOUR HEAD OUT OF YOUR ASS, BRAHMA! NEVER UNDERESTIMATE YOUR OPPONENT --

THIS AIN'T EXACTLY THE ***SUPER BOWL*** OF INVASIONS, LADY! SO FAR, IT'S BEEN AN ***EASY RIDE--!***

OVERCONFIDENCE... RIGHT OUT OF THE BLOODPOOL PROGRAM, EH? YOU MAY BE THREE TIMES THE ***MUSCLE,*** B-BOY... BUT UNTIL YOU'VE STARED YOUR ENEMY IN THE ***FACE,*** YOU'D BE AN ***IDIOT*** TO ASSUME YOU CAN JUST --

DAMMIT--!

HRUNNT--!

NNK--!

HUH. TRIPWIRE ENERGY GRID THAT FRIES THE SYNAPSES ON CONTACT...

WHO KNEW?

HASSAN KUSSEIN, I PRESUME. SCUMBAG DESPOT. WOULD-BE PLAYER ON THE WORLD STAGE.

SORRY. I'M NOT IMPRESSED.

AND *THIS* IS YOUR INFAMOUS HONOR GUARD? THESE *ERECTOR SET* REJECTS? JEEZUS...!

PSI-FIRE... DON'T...

HEY, SENTINEL... I'VE GOT THIS ONE.

< *INFIDELS!* YOU DARE SET FOOT ON THIS HOLY GROUND! MY HONOR GUARD WILL -- >

BY ALL MEANS, SEND YOUR TOYS TO DEAL WITH MY THICK-HEADED TEAMMATES. THAT LEAVES YOU AND I ALONE TO... *TALK.*

ABOUT LIFE. ABOUT SEX. ABOUT PAIN.

IN OTHER WORDS... THINGS I'M INTIMATELY ACQUAINTED WITH.

OUCH. THAT LOOKS LIKE IT *HURTS.*

ME? I TRY TO AVOID GETTING NAILED ALTOGETHER. KEEPS ME LOOKING PRETTY. LIKE ALI.

HNNNNK--!

SPECS ON THESE THINGS SAY THEY'VE GOT A FEW STRUCTURAL WEAK POINTS.

IN THE HEAT OF BATTLE, DESIGN FLAWS CAN BE A CAT'S BEST FRIEND. SO LET'S --

COUGAR --

-- DON'T TALK TO ME ABOUT "*STRUCTURAL WEAK POINTS*".

I'M SENDING THIS MONSTROSITY BACK TO THE FIRES IT WAS FORGED IN!

IF I AM TO BE TRAPPED ON THIS BACKWARDS ROCK OF A PLANET --

-- I WILL NOT BE BOUND BY ITS MORALITY!

THIS WORLD WILL *KNOW* WHAT IT MEANS TO DEAL WITH A KATELLAN WARRIOR BORN!

BY MY IRON HAND--!

BAH...

... THESE PATHETIC POLITICAL STRUGGLES ARE BEGINNING TO *ANNOY* ME.

HIDDEN SEATS OF PERCEIVED POWER... CONSTANTLY WARRING FOR THE BIGGEST *NOTHING* IN THE UNIVERSE.

THIS PLANET HAS NOT SEEN *TRUE* WAR. NOT AS IT EXISTS IN THE COLD HEARTLESSNESS OF *SPACE*...

WHAT'S WITH THE *SPEECHES?*

YOU WANNA' WRESTLE WITH THE EXTREMITIES OF THE SOUL... MAYBE YOU SHOULD TALK TO THE TEAM-SANCTIONED *THERAPIST* BACK IN WASHINGTON...

HMMF.

PSYCHOLOGY. ANOTHER HUMAN MYTH OF SPIRITUAL ATTRITION.

OH, *GREAT.* NOW YOU'RE A *SCIENTOLOGIST?*

LET'S JUST GET *INSIDE* BEFORE WE MISS OUT ON THE *REAL* PARTY...!

THE WHITE HOUSE

PROGRESS REPORT FROM ***BAGHDAD,*** MISTER PRESIDENT. THE AWAY TEAM HAS INFILTRATED THE MAIN SCIENCE COMPOUND...

... WE ALSO JUST GOT WORD THAT TERRELL'S TEAM IS *EN ROUTE* TO DEAL WITH SOME LOCAL ***SUPER-VILLAIN*** NONSENSE.

OBVIOUSLY, WE SHOULD BE MUCH MORE CONCERNED WITH LANGSTON'S OP. IF DR. WELLS' PRIME EXPERIMENT ***IS*** THERE AND STILL IN STASIS, WE NEED TO GET TO IT BEFORE KUSSEIN ACTIVATES IT. THAT KIND OF SHIFT IN THE BALANCE OF POWER --

UNDERSTOOD, JERRY. I'M STILL SHOCKED THAT ***ANY*** OF WELLS' SUBJECTS STILL ***EXIST...!***

AND WHERE IN GOD'S NAME IS ***AGENT GRAVES*** DURING ALL THIS?!

SUPPOSEDLY VACATIONING WITH HIS FAMILY ON THE NORTH SHORE OF KAUAI.

FAMILY? SINCE WHEN DOES GRAVES HAVE A ***FAMILY?!***

I THINK HE KNOWS HE'S GOT AN ***IMAGE PROBLEM,*** SIR. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF YOUNGBLOOD... IT'S ODD ENOUGH THAT ANYONE WOULD EVEN ***TAKE*** THAT POSITION, MUCH LESS ***VOLUNTEER*** THE WAY HE DID.

WELL, THE ENTIRE ***SUPERHERO SITUATION*** IN GENERAL KEEPS ME UP AT NIGHT...

YOU'D RATHER HAVE THEM ACTING ***INDEPENDENTLY,*** SIR? GOD KNOWS THE ***NIGHTMARE*** THAT'D RESULT...!

NO, I KNOW YOU'RE RIGHT. THESE PEOPLE... THEY'RE NOT ***NORMAL.*** THEIR LIFESTYLES, THEIR MORALITY... I SHUDDER TO THINK WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF WE ***DIDN'T*** HAVE THEM ON THE PAYROLL, ACTING UNDER THE AUSPICES OF ***NATIONALISM.***

BUT THERE'S AN ENTIRE ***CULTURE*** EMERGING AROUND US... CODE NAMES AND COSTUMES, DOMESTIC TERRORISTS WEARING MASKS AND CAPES AND ARMOR PLATING. AND I CAN'T TELL IF THE AVERAGE AMERICAN FINDS IT ALL AMUSING, FASCINATING OR JUST PLAIN ***OBSCENE.***

THEY'RE... ***DIFFERENT*** FROM US. EVEN A MAN LIKE ***TERRELL...*** HE'S JUST GOING TO GET SUCKED DOWN THE ***WHIRL-POOL,*** ISN'T HE?

I SUPPOSE THIS IS JUST THE WORLD WE LIVE IN NOW...

"... WE'D BETTER JUST GET ***USED*** TO IT."

-- SO THE HIRED GRUNTS HAVE THE ALLEYWAY BLOCKED OFF? TAKE US DOWN LOW SO WE CAN DO ***OUR*** THING...!

RIGHT *THERE!* AND LOCAL COPS ARE MOVING IN, TOO!

LET'S BRING THE NOISE, GAGE!

ONE SECOND! *SOME* OF US NEED A LITTLE *HELP* TO KEEP MOBILE...!

TAKES ALL KINDS, I GUESS.

YEAH, WHATEVER... LET'S JUST MAKE THIS A *QUICK* ONE AND GET THE HELL UP *OUT* OF HERE BEFORE ANY *REAL* OPPOSITION ARRIVES...!

BRING 'EM ON! I'LL BREAK EVERY ONE OF 'EM INTO LITTLE PIECES! I'LL EAT 'EM FER BREAKFAST!

YEAH, YOU'RE A REAL BADASS, "STRONGARM".

HOW 'BOUT LIVING UP TO YOUR *NAME* AND PEELING APART THIS HI-TECH PADDY WAGON...?

UNLESS YOU WANT *ME* TO CUT THROUGH WITH MY *HAND LASER* --

BACK OFF, LITTLE MAN --

-- THIS IS WHAT I'M *HERE* FOR!

'BOUT *TIME* YOU TWO SHOWED UP--!

JUST WAIT 'TIL ONE OF *YOU* GETS POPPED... SEE HOW LONG WE LET *YOU* STEW! DAMN...!

DON'T LOOK A GIFT HORSE IN THE MOUTH! IF THE *GOOD GUYS* CAN MANAGE A TEAM-UP, SO CAN WE.

DEADLOCK. STARBRIGHT. WELCOME BACK TO THE LAND OF THE FREE. HOPE YOU SURVIVE THE EXPERIENCE.

GLAD TO SEE YOU'VE KEPT UP ON YOUR *READING,* STRONGARM.

SO WHAT'S OUR NEXT MOVE?

SPLIT AND REASSESS, DON'TCHA THINK? HOW'S OUR SAFEHOUSE IN PHILLY? STILL GOT ELECTRICITY THERE --

HOLD IT, GUYS. *PROXIMITY SENSOR* JUST WENT OFF THE CHARTS--!

INCOMING! ETA THREE-POINT-FIVE SECONDS!

YOU'RE SERIOUS?! *ALREADY?!*

GODDAMN IT... MUST BE A SLOW NEWS DAY --

SLOW ENOUGH.

HNN.

THAT THE BEST YOU GOT? COMIN' *ALONE* WAS YER *FIRST* MISTAKE, ROBOT--!

NEGATIVE ASSUMPTION. I'M SIMPLY THE FIRST WAVE.

LOOK BEHIND YOU.

THESE DORKS NEVER *LEARN*, DO THEY?

THE ENTIRE FOUR -- ALL AT ONCE? FINALLY, A TRUE BATTLE ROYALE--!

CAREFUL WHAT YOU *WISH* FOR, VOGUE. LET'S JUST DO OUR JOBS HERE, PEOPLE.

SAFEGUARDING AMERICA. PROTECTING MANKIND. ALL THAT GOOD STUFF. NOW...

... ALL OPERATIVES -- *ENGAGE!*

BAGHDAD

LET ME TELL YOU A *STORY*...

SEE, I'M NOT THE DO-GOODER YOU PROBABLY *THINK* I AM.

SURE, I'M IN YOUNGBLOOD. I'VE GOT THE COSTUME. I'VE GOT THE CODE-NAME. I'VE GOT THE MORAL IMPERATIVE.

AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, I'VE GOT THE *ENEMY* STANDING RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME.

< *ARROGANT SCUM!* >

NO DOUBT ABOUT *THAT*.

MOM AND DAD WALLER FELT THE SAME WAY. THEY FELT LITTLE *DAVEY* WAS A BIT TOO FULL OF HIMSELF, EVEN *BEFORE* MY TELEKINETIC AND PYROKINETIC ABILITIES KICKED IN.

THEY WERE THE *FIRST* DEATHS I EXPERIENCED. FROM THERE, I GUESS I GOT A *TASTE* FOR IT. AS A TELEPATH, READING THE MIND OF SOMEONE *IN* THEIR MOMENT OF TERMINATION...

... WELL, IT'S BETTER THAN *SEX*, HASSAN.

KNOW WHAT I MEAN?

EVEN WITH THE PSYCHIC DAMPENERS THE PENTAGON CLAMPED ONTO MY BRAIN, I CAN STILL SMELL *YOUR* FEAR.

< I FEAR *NOTHING*, WHELP! >

< CERTAINLY NOT THE WHINE OF A SPOILED AMERICAN BRAT! >

RIGHT.

YOUR "HONOR GUARD" FIRST...

< NO--! >

HNNNGGGGGGGG--!

RIGHT NOW... YOU'RE MY *DAD*, JUST COMING HOME AND FINDING MOM TWISTED AND BROKEN ON THE KITCHEN FLOOR.

THIS IS WHAT I DID TO *HIM*...

FEELING THE *PRESSURE*, YET? THAT'S YOUR BRAIN *SWELLING*...!

SEE YOU IN HELL, HASSAN.
GGGGGGT--!

HURRNN--

... HURTS LIKE A SON OF A BITCH...

... HEAD FEELS LIKE OATMEAL... BREAKING THROUGH THE DAMPENERS... EVEN *TEMPORARILY*...

... BUT IT WAS SO *WORTH IT.*

THEY ARE WITHIN THIS --

-- ANTECHAMBER...!

OH, *COME ON...!*

ALL THAT IS SACRED--!

WALLER -- WHAT DID YOU *DO?!* IS THAT --

FIVE SECONDS AGO, IT WAS HASSAN KUSSEIN.

NOW IT'S JUST --

YEAH, NO NEED TO ELABORATE...!

THE... SLAYING OF ONE'S AGGRESSOR... IN SUCH A MANNER...

THERE IS... LITTLE *HONOR* IN...

HONOR?! YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT HONOR? GIVE ME A BREAK...!

SENTINEL'S GONNA' PITCH A *FIT* WHEN HE --

WHU...

... PSI-*FIRE*... I-I SAID...

A LITTLE *LATE* FOR STRATEGY, BOSS. I *TOOK CARE* OF THINGS...

YOU... TOOK CARE...?!

OH MY *GOD*...!

PSI-FIRE...!

WHU... WUT *HIT* ME...?

H-HOW'D I GET *BLOOD* ALL OVER ME? WHO THE HELL--?!

OH.

WHAT'S THE *PROBLEM?*

WHOA. YOU BLEW THE GUY'S *HEAD* OFF...!

HOW'D YOU *DO* THAT, BRO?

YOU *REALLY* WANT TO KNOW, BRAHMA--?

NO, HE DOESN'T. AND I THINK YOU'VE DONE ENOUGH FOR ONE DAY.

WHEN *GRAVES* GETS WIND OF THIS --

OKAY, THAT'S ENOUGH... OUT OF *EVERYONE.*

FORGET KUSSEIN. COLLATERAL DAMAGE, AT BEST. I'M SURE THERE'LL BE THE REQUISITE *COVER STORY*...

LET'S JUST PRESS ON AND GET WHAT WE CAME FOR...

... HE'S LOCKED UP IN HERE *SOMEWHERE.*

NEXT ISSUE

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